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**Course Introduction and Expectations**

**U.S. History ACP**

**2015-2016**

**Course Description:**

Welcome to U.S. History ACP. We will begin our study of American history with a thorough examination of the United States Constitution. In order to understand much of American history, it is important to understand the foundations of the American government. After this unit, we will explore the history of the United States from the Founding period through the present, moving through this information thematically. In total, we will examine United States history through four themes: Democracy and Authority, Equality and Hierarchy, Individualism and Collectivism and American Foreign Policy.

**Essential Questions for the year:**

Throughout this year we will continually turn to the following essential questions and try to formulate thoughtful and analytical answers based on the knowledge gained through our various units of study:

1. How effectively has the federal government maintained its authority while protecting the rights of the individual and of states?

2. Has the United States become a more inclusive nation over time regarding people’s ability to gain the privilege of American citizenship regardless of personal characteristics?

3. Has the United States government, through its various forms of intervention, established an appropriate balance between individual economic opportunity and the collective welfare of the people?

4. Have foreign policy decisions by the United States furthered American ideologies and national interests?

**Themes:**

We will study each theme independently, tracing it from the founding to the present. This means that we will cycle through American history four distinct times, each with a different perspective and focus.

A thematic approach to the study of history is advantageous because it allows students to:

* Evaluate and analyze how key issues in American history transcend time and space.
* Engage more meaningfully with material, as we study it from a range of perspectives that resonate in different ways with different students.
* Learn equally about all eras of United States history without rushing to get to “the end.”
* Understand how various aspects of American history cohere to form a narrative of the American experience.

**Unit One***: The Constitution*

*Focus Questions:*

1. In what ways does the Constitution limit the power of government to make change?
2. What are the characteristics of the U.S. government set forth by the Constitution? How do these processes work?

**Unit Two:** *Democracy and Authority: Striving for Balance between Democracy and Authority*

This unit examines the increasing power of the federal government and the rights of the people in the United States. This theme will explore how the power of the federal government fluctuates at various times depending on circumstances, including the cultural and political climate.

Focus Question:

How has the relationship between the national and state government evolved over time?

**Unit Three:** *Equality and Hierarchy: The Struggle for Equality*

This unit explores how different groups throughout history have experienced movement on the spectrum of full equality and being part of a rigid social/political/economic structure. Focus Questions:

* Through what mechanisms have marginalized groups gained greater de jure (legal) and de facto (practical) equality?

**Unit Four:** *Individualism and Collectivism: An Economic History*

This unit examines the shift from a laissez faire government to a government that created a highly interconnected economic system by establishing relationship between government, business, labor and people. Oftentimes, these changes resulted from crises in the nation and permanently centralized the role of the government in people’s lives.

Focus Question:

* Have collective actions/legislation/reforms better ensured American ideologies (American Dream, liberty, freedom, individualism, equality) over time?

**Unit Five:** *American Foreign Policy*

This unit examines the motives and methods of United States involvement in foreign affairs.

Focus Questions:

* What have been the paths, costs and motives towards becoming a superpower?
* To what extent has the motivating factors of American foreign policy (i.e, isolationism, ideology and practical interests) sacrificed American ideals?

**Respect & Class Citizenship:**

Although I am the teacher in the classroom, I am not the only one that you can learn from. Each student in this class has valuable opinions, ideas, and knowledge to contribute. This does not mean that you have to agree with all that is shared, but it does mean that as a member of this class you have the responsibility to respectfully disagree. Every member of this class should feel comfortable expressing his/her opinions, asking questions, and sharing ideas. Your class citizenship will be evaluated twice a quarter- once at midterm and again at the end of the term.

**Completing Homework Assignments:**

Aside from reading and note taking, you will be assigned various tasks to complete for homework. Some homework will be collected and graded for accuracy and completeness, while others will be scanned for effort and completeness. Class discussions revolve around topics that directly relate to homework assignments, thus it is important to read the text thoroughly. You should be able to hold insightful conversations about the text and be an active participant in classroom discussions. Many of the primary and secondary sources that are assigned are challenging and require students to put in their full effort in order to understand the meaning.

You are expected to have your assignment in hand and ready to go at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will be accepted for reduced credit the next class period. It is your responsibility to show me the late assignment. If you have an unexcused absences or a cut you will receive no credit for your assignment (see student handbook).

**Large Assignments:**

Larger assignments like, papers and projects, will be scheduled in advance so that students have a reasonable length of time to complete the assignment. I suggest that students always keep a copy of their work whether it is a hard or electronic copy. There will be no extension on papers and projects except in major emergencies. Unexcused late papers and projects will be accepted for only one day after the due date and will receive no higher than a 70. If you have an unexcused absences or a cut you will receive no credit for your assignment (see student handbook).

**Writing & Research:**

Writing is a central component to the work we do in the Social Studies Department.  This year you will have multiple experiences producing essays, both analytical and narrative. Below is a preview of the types of assignments you will complete.

* 2 analytical assignments
  + 1 Historiographical essay
  + 1 Analytical essay/project
* 1 narrative or summative

**Attendance and Make-up Work:**

Come to class! In order for you to get the most out of class it is extremely important that you are in class participating in discussions, debates, and cooperative exercises. Daily attendance will be taken and the school policy on attendance will be followed.

Be on time! You’d be amazed at how much information can be packed into a five-minute period. It is distracting to your classmates and to me when students come to class late. The school policy on tardies will also be enforced.

You are responsible for your make up work—homework, in class notes, and exams. In order to receive credit for your work, I must receive, or it becomes a zero.

If you are attending a field trip be sure to get the assignments you will be missing and hand in the assignments that are due before you leave on the field trip. Please review the school’s policy on absences (field trips included) and make up work in the student handbook.

**Class Website:**

In addition, you can find updated lessons, handouts and homework on my wikispace. Please bookmark <http://bartelsusacp.wikispaces.com>.

**Extra Help:**

It is my goal to help each student achieve his/her very best in this course. I am more than willing to assist you with any aspect of this course and will do my best to ensure your success if you put forth your best effort. Please feel free to talk to me if you have questions, concerns, or problems. I am often available before and after school, but please make an appointment with me to ensure I am around when you come for help. Remember: the Social Studies lab is a resource that can be used for assistance when writing papers, before a test, or on homework. Check the schedule for assigned periods.

**Grade Breakdown: Quarters One and Four**

Class Citizenship (see attached for breakdown) 10%

Assessments (tests, in-class essays, quizzes, large projects) 65%

Term Assignments (homework, in-class group work, 25%

small projects)